

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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TAGS: ENRG, ETRD, TECH, IS

SUBJ: ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM

REF: TEL AVIV 10458 AND A-48

1. MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY HAIM BAR-LEV, ADDRESSING A CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR SCIENCES AT TECHNION UNIVERSITY ON APRIL 15, SAID THAT AFTER 1980 ALL NEW POWER STATIONS BUILT IN ISRAEL WILL BE NUCLEAR. ISRAEL'S FIRST NUCLEAR PLANT, HE SAID, WOULD BE COMPLETED BY 1982 AND WILL BE FOLLOWED BY SEVERAL ADDITIONAL PLANTS. ARIEL AMIAD, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE ISRAEL ELECTRIC CORP, TOLD CONFERENCE THAT AN INTERNATIONAL TENDER WILL BE ISSUED WITHIN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS ON FIRST PLANT. THIS PLANT WILL HAVE CAPACITY OF 660 MEGAWATTS AND WILL COST "ABOUT 500 MILLION DOLLARS". AMIAD SAID THAT ISRAEL AEC HAD GIVEN ELECTRIC CORP, WHICH PRODUCES OVER 95 PERCENT OF ISRAEL'S ELECTRICITY, EXCLUSIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM.

2. SUBJECT RAISED APRIL 16 BY ECON COUNSELOR AND COMATT DURING VISIT TO NAHAL SOREQ NUCLEAR RESEARCH CENTER. DIRECTOR PELAH CONFIRMED POINTS CITED ABOVE, ADDING
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THAT AT LEAST FOUR NUCLEAR REACTORS WOULD BE NEEDED DURING 1980'S. HE NOTED THAT SUCCESSFUL BIDDER

FOR FIRST REACTOR WILL PROBABLY ALSO RECEIVE CONTRACTS
FOR FOLLOW-ON REACTORS.

3. WHEN ASKED ABOUT STATUS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH
WESTINGHOUSE AND GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY, PELAH
SAID THAT THEY WERE IN ALMOST CONTINUOUS CONTACT WITH
REPRESENTATIVES OF THOSE FIRMS. HE SAID THAT THERE
IS AN "85-90 PERCENT CHANCE THAT ONE OF AMERICAN
COMPANIES WILL GET THE CONTRACTS", ALTHOUGH A GERMAN
FIRM IS INTERESTED IN BIDDING. SINCE THESE OFFICIALS
WILL MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS WITH RESPECT TO FINAL
CHOICE BETWEEN BIDDERS, EMBOFFS TOOK OPPORTUNITY ONCE
AGAIN TO CONVEY KEEN USG INTEREST IN OUTCOME OF BIDDING.

4. IN RESPONSE QUERY, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH REACTOR
AT SOREQ STATED THAT UP UNTIL ABOUT SIX YEARS AGO FUEL
ELEMENTS FOR REACTOR WERE SUPPLIED BY US FIRMS
(PENNSYLVANIA AND UNITED NUCLEAR CORP). AT THAT TIME,
HOWEVER, SOREQ SWITCHED TO A FRENCH SUPPLIER "FOR
REASONS OF PRICE AND QUALITY CONTROL". WHEN ASKED
IF HE HAD CHECKED ON RECENT US PRICES, DIRECTOR
SAID THAT HE HAD NOT AND AGREED THAT US FUEL ELEMENTS
ARE PROBABLY NOW MORE COMPETITIVE. HE ADDED THAT
THEY HAVE ABOUT ONE YEAR'S SUPPLY ON HAND, BUT NEXT
YEAR WILL BE INTERESTED IN US OFFER OF SUPPLY OF FUEL
ELEMENTS.

5. COMMENT: GENERAL ELECTRIC AND WESTINGHOUSE APPEAR
TO BE FRONT RUNNERS IN COMPETITION FOR POWER PLANT
CONTRACTS, AND NEITHER HAS REQUESTED ASSISTANCE OF
EMBASSY AT THIS PRELIMINARY STAGE OF THEIR DISCUSSIONS
WITH GOI. WE NEVERTHELESS INTEND TO WATCH SITUATION
CLOSELY IN LIGHT INTEREST SHOWN BY GERMANS AND
POSSIBLY OTHERS.
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